

## I. Proverbs

- a. Purpose: In this session we want to survey the book of Proverbs by discussing the title, authorship, purpose and structure of the book of Proverbs in addition to a closer look at the book and how it relates the rest of the Bible.
- b. Title
  - i. The book of Proverbs begins with *שְׁלֹמֹה מְשָׁלֵי*, which means "the proverbs of Solomon."<sup>1</sup>
  - ii. Typically the first word or first two words of the beginning of the book serve as a title for the book of the Old Testament.
  - iii. How we got our English title "Proverbs" is from the Latin Vulgate title *Liber Proverbiorum*.<sup>2</sup>
- c. Authorship
  - i. There are scholars that put doubt that Solomon wrote a majority of the book.
  - ii. But looking at the book of Proverbs we see at important sections of the book it said it was written by Solomon.
    1. Recall earlier how the book of Proverbs begins with *שְׁלֹמֹה מְשָׁלֵי*, which means "the proverbs of Solomon" (**Proverbs 1:1**)
    2. The phrase *שְׁלֹמֹה מְשָׁלֵי* ("the proverbs of Solomon") also "begins the sections **10:1-22:16** (10:1) and **25:1-29:27** (25:1)."<sup>3</sup>
  - iii. Knowing the characteristics of Solomon also makes it likely that much of the book of Proverbs is authored by him
    1. Solomon as a king have the ability to have his works passed on and receive attention.
    2. According to **1 Kings 4:29-34** Solomon's knowledge and wisdom surpassed all the other wise men and thus make him a likely candidate to write Proverbs.<sup>4</sup>
      - a. According to **v.29** God gave Solomon lots of wisdom: *"Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore."*
      - b. In **verses 30-31** we see Solomon's wisdom surpasses many people: *"Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. 30 Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations."*

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18281-18282.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18282-18283.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 18627.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18316-18317.

- c. In **verses 33** we see Solomon's subject area was vast: "*He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish.*" → We are thus not surprised if Solomon wrote Proverbs and present a lot of analogy from the natural world.
    - d. In **verses 34** we see Solomon's wisdom was recognized by other people: "*Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.*"
    - e. Finally in **verses 32** we see Solomon wrote many Proverbs and songs: "*He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.*"
  - iv. According to Jewish tradition as recorded in the Jewish Talmud: "Hezekiah and his colleagues wrote the following, and a mnemonic to remember which books they wrote is yod, mem, shin, kuf: Isaiah [Yeshaya], Proverbs [Mishlei]...." (Baba Bathra 15a)<sup>5</sup>
    - 1. Mark Rooker believes "This may mean no more than the fact that they collected portions of the book or were in some way responsible for editing them."<sup>6</sup>
    - 2. We see this hinted at in **Proverbs 25:1**= "*These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed.*"
      - a. Notice it mentioned still these proverbs are that "*of Solomon*"
      - b. Yet the "*the men of Hezekiah*" had them "*transcribed.*"
    - 3. Therefore one can believe that the book of Solomon is largely written by Solomon with later editors compiling additional wise saying from Solomon and others as well.
  - v. According to Mark Rooker: "contributions of other wisdom teachers such as Agur and Lemuel were added to the Solomonic collection (as he was the patron of the Israelite wisdom tradition), thus giving the book its final form. Agur and Lemuel may possibly have been members of the sages, which along with priests, prophets, and kings constituted the four major leadership classes in Israelite society."<sup>7</sup>
- d. Purpose
  - i. According to Richard Mayhue **Proverbs** is about "The divine perspective on how to handle life's issues."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Source: [https://www.sefaria.org/Bava\\_Batra.15a.8?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Bava_Batra.15a.8?lang=bi).

<sup>6</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18629-18630.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18326-18329.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master's Seminary), 72.

- ii. According to Mark Rooker **Proverbs** is “an instructional manual to lead people in righteous living before God.”<sup>9</sup>
- iii. According to Andrew Hill: “The purpose of the book of Proverbs is to collect the wisdom of ancient Israel and offer both instruction and example in godly living.”<sup>10</sup>
- iv. The beginning of Proverbs states the book’s purpose: “*To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, 3 To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity; 4 To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion, 5 A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, 6 To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles. 7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.*” (**Proverbs 1:2-7**)
  - 1. Five infinitive verbs in **verses 2-7** shows the book’s purpose:
    - a. “to know” (**v.2**)
    - b. “to discern” (**v.2**)
    - c. “to receive” (**v.3**)
    - d. “to give...prudence, knowledge, discretion” (**v.4**)
    - e. “to understand” (**v.6**)
  - 2. Yet in all of this we must not miss the relations of all this to God: “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*” (**v.7a**)
  - 3. Thus: Proverbs is about living wisely in light of God and wisdom begins with understanding and honoring God.
- v. In my own words: Proverbs is about living wisely beginning with fearing God which leads to further insight from God’s Word for all of life.
- e. Structure
  - i. Mayhue’s outline:<sup>11</sup>
    - 1. Proverbs of Solomon (**Proverbs 1-29**)
    - 2. Proverbs of Agur (**Proverbs 30**)
    - 3. Proverbs of Lemuel (**Proverbs 31**)
  - ii. Sections of the book by distinctive forms<sup>12</sup>
    - 1. Discourse proverbs (**Proverb 1:8– 9:18**)
    - 2. Mostly two-line proverbs in antithetical parallelism (**Proverbs 10:1-15:33**)
    - 3. Two-lines either in synonymous or synthetic parallelism (**Proverbs 16:1-22:16**)
    - 4. Various forms occur, though four-line proverbs are most dominant (**Proverbs 22:17-24:22**)
    - 5. Two-line, four-line, and discourse proverbs (**Proverbs 24:23-34**)

<sup>9</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Proverbs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18434-18435.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Hill and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 441.

<sup>11</sup> What follows below is quoted verbatim from Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 72.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Proverbs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18326-18425.

6. 25: 1– 29: 27 Mostly two-line, three-line, and four-line proverbs (**Proverbs 25:1-29:27**)
  - a. Comparative and synthetic parallelism ((**Proverbs 25-26**))
  - b. Antithetic parallelism (**Proverbs 28-29**)
7. Two-line, four-line, and numerical proverbs (**Proverbs 30:1-33**)
8. Two-line and four-line proverbs (**Proverbs 31:2-9**)
9. 31: 10– 31 Alphabetic acrostic poem (**Proverbs 31:10-31**)
- iii. Sections of the book by new title<sup>13</sup>
  1. This leads to a sevenfold division
    - a. Solomon's Reflections on the Way of Wisdom (**Proverbs 1-9**)
    - b. Proverbs of Solomon (**Proverbs 10:1-22:16**)
    - c. Anonymous Wise Sayings (**Proverbs 22:17-24:22**)
    - d. More Anonymous Sayings (**Proverbs 24:23-34**)
    - e. More Proverbs of Solomon (**Proverbs 25-29**)
    - f. Sayings of Agur (**Proverbs 30**)
    - g. Sayings of Lemuel (**Proverbs 31**)
- f. Closer look at Proverbs
  - i. The book as a whole
    1. The “*fear of the Lord*” is mentioned thirteen times: **Proverbs 1:29, 2:5, 8:13, 9:10, 10:27, 14:26-27, 15:15, 15:33, 16:6, 19:23, 22:4, 23:17.**<sup>14</sup>
    2. The verbal form of “*fear the Lord*” appears another four times: **Proverbs 3:7, 14:2, 24:21, 31:30.**<sup>15</sup>
    3. The content of the book must be understood in light of the fear of the Lord.<sup>16</sup>
  - ii. First section: Solomon's Reflections on the Way of Wisdom (**Proverbs 1-9**)
    1. The first section of the book (**Proverbs 1-9**) begins the first chapter and last chapter with the theme of “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,*” in **Proverbs 1:7** and **Proverb 9:10**.
    2. In the first section “only two options are given: the way of wisdom or the way of folly.”<sup>17</sup>
  - iii. Second section: Proverbs of Solomon (**Proverbs 10:1-22:16**)
    1. This section consists of 375 single proverbial sayings which is harder to find its order.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Proverbs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18446-18453.

<sup>14</sup> Walter Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 135-36.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 136.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Proverbs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18550-18551.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Proverbs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 18480.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Book of Proverbs” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 18492.

2. This section can be further divided into **Proverbs 10-15** and **Proverbs 16-22:16**.<sup>19</sup>
  - a. **Proverbs 10-15** has more antithetic parallelism and emphasize the way things usually occur.
  - b. **Proverbs 16:1-22:16** is primarily made up of synonymous parallelisms.<sup>20</sup>
- iv. Fifth section: More Proverbs of Solomon (**Proverbs 25-29**)
  1. Can be further subdivided into two sections: **Proverbs 25-27** and **Proverbs 28-29**.<sup>21</sup>
  2. **Proverbs 25-27** has parallel lines that are largely synonymous parallel.
  3. **Proverbs 28-29** are mostly antithetical parallelism. These two chapters also have more contrasts between the rich and the poor than in other sections of the book.<sup>22</sup>
- g. Key Passages<sup>23</sup>
  - i. **3:5-6** Trust in the Lord and not in yourself
  - ii. **5:15-23** Father's warnings to be satisfied with your own wife
  - iii. **6:16-19** Seven things the Lord hates
  - iv. **10:18-20** Warnings on speech "lying lips, slander, many words"
  - v. **16:18-19** Pride before destruction, haughty vs. humble spirit
  - vi. **19:17** ". . . gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord."
  - vii. **22:6** Training a child in his "way"
  - viii. **25:21-22** Love your enemies
  - ix. **27:17** "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."
- h. Place of this book in the Canon
  - i. Connection with previous revelation
    1. Deuteronomy mentioned that one has to learn how to fear God: **Deuteronomy 4:10, 14:23, 17:19, 31:12-13**.<sup>24</sup>
    2. Here in the book of Proverbs it shows us what fearing the Lord practically looks like.
  - ii. New Testament use of Proverbs<sup>25</sup>
    1. Christian acceptance of God's discipline in **Hebrews 12:5-6** quotes **Proverbs 3:11-12**.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 18497.

<sup>20</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18498-18499.

<sup>21</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18517-18518.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18520-18521.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master's Seminary), 72.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 135f.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Book of Proverbs" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 18570-18573.

2. Both **James 4:6** and **1 Peter 5:5** cite **Proverbs 3:34** to motivate humility.
  3. **1 Peter 4:18** quotes **Proverbs 11:31** concerning God's judgment.
  4. **Romans 12: 20** quotes **Proverbs 25:21-22** to address issues of vengeance.
  5. **2 Peter 2:22** quotes **Proverbs 26:11** about returning to folly.
- iii. Pointing towards Christ
1. Jesus is wisdom from God as the Logos. He is the Only One who lived out and fulfilled Proverbs!
  2. *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who is wise wins souls."* (**Proverbs 11:30**)
    - a. No one of course can have enough righteousness to enjoy the tree of Life.
    - b. Jesus of course can!
    - c. Jesus also died on a "tree" to give us life.